

Me's Pact

By ALBERT ELLENBERG

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A top Look magazine official made plans today to fly "immediately" to West Germany in a "desperate attempt" to block serialization of an unauthorized version of William Manchester's "The Death of a President" by the magazine Stern.

Cowles Communications, which owns Look, sold the German language serialization rights to Stern for \$72,500. The magazine took Look by "surprise" yesterday with its announcement that it would publish the undeleted version objected to by Jacqueline Kennedy.

Cowles editor William Attwood reacted sharply with the declaration that the magazine would "go to any length to prevent the publication by Stern of any part of Mr. Manchester's book that has not been approved."

Cowles assailed Stern's plan to begin serialization of the undeleted version Jan. 17 as a "maverick move . . . The magazine has only the interest of putting 'unexpurgated' on the cover and selling more copies."

He stopped short of saying that the action by the German periodical could jeopardize the agreement tortuously worked out between Cowles and Mrs. Kennedy.

But observers discerned a hidden threat in a statement by a spokesman for the Kennedy family. "We do not know anything about the Stern statement except Look represented to us that they had made no agreement which permitted Stern or any other publication to which Look had sold right to publish any text other than that which appears in Look magazine."

In Hamburg, Stern editor-in-chief Henri Nannen insisted that the contract with Look made no provision for any changes or cuts in the text.

Germany Editor Confident

Nannen said he was sure that the Kennedys would not be able to halt publication by court action in West Germany because only material which is "false or damaging to a person's honor" can be blocked.

In a reference to reports that the Manchester book portrays President Johnson in an inflating light, Nannen added:

"I can understand that Sen. Robert Kennedy would like to avert this dispute [with Johnson] for the sake of his political career, but this can be no reason for not reporting the complete, unmodified truth."

Meanwhile, Look syndicate manager Joseph Wurzel meets today with other top officers of the Cowles empire before flying

See Drew Pearson on Page 26 and Max Lerner on Page 29.

to Hamburg for a confrontation with Nannen.

The Look people were also concerned today with toning up their image after their earlier, bruising confrontation with a solid Kennedy front.

"We didn't give in," insisted one Look spokesman. "Both sides gave a little. They wanted some things out completely, at first, but they made some concessions and agreed to have some things paraphrased."

The source also declared that only 400, not 1,600, words had been deleted. The belief that 1,600 words had been cut from the serialized version grew out of Atwood's statement that 1,600 words were "involved" in the agreement, the spokesman said.

According to the Look man, the settlement had actually been reached early Wednesday evening, but bitter wrangling over the wording of a joint statement held up the formal announcement for more than three hours.

The Kennedy forces wanted the statement to say that Look had agreed to modify or trim all passages disturbing to Mrs. Kennedy, said the magazine's spokesman.

Issue Separate Statements

"We weren't going to let ourselves look like we had abjectly surrendered when it wasn't so," he said. Finally, both sides released their own statements.

Even if the new hurdle created by Stern's plans is overcome—and sources in the publishing field doubt that the West German magazine can be stopped from printing the unauthorized

version—little can be done about blocking bootlegged publications of the original text in foreign countries which do not subscribe to international copyright agreements.

And the Kennedy family still hasn't come to an agreement with Harper & Row, which plans to publish Manchester's 300,000-word manuscript in April. An out of court settlement, however, is believed to be imminent.

A court hearing is scheduled for Tuesday. On Monday, Mrs. Kennedy will fly with her two children to the British West Indies for a vacation on the isle of Antigua.